

**COMMUNITY BOOK.** You must read the following community book. The community book is one which is read by every member of the class. Parents are also invited to read the community book. During the first week of school, your English teachers will review, conduct, or oversee projects, presentations, and group seminars -- all in an effort to generate a sharing of ideas as a community.

Author	Title
<b>John Steinbeck</b>	<i>The Grapes of Wrath.</i> Steinbeck's moving novel tells the story of the Joad family and their hardships during the Great Depression. At times lyrical and at times documentary, this novel will transport you to one of the most important and difficult periods of American history. Ma, Tom, and Rose of Sharon are characters who will stay with you long after you finish reading the book. Powerful ideas paired with an accessible style make this one of the classics of American literature.

In addition to the Community Book, you must read one non-fiction book, one fiction book, and one book of essays from the lists which follow. So, you will read a total of **four** books. You are certainly welcome to read more (for some extra credit, perhaps?). You'll be asked to write papers about some aspect of each of the books you read, so you should take some notes. [Click here](#) for some note-taking suggestions. Also, before randomly selecting a book, take some time to research it. You should also strongly consider emailing me for recommendations ([lnorment@maclay.org](mailto:lnorment@maclay.org)).

**NON-FICTION.**

Author	Title
Stephen Amidon	<i>Something Like the Gods: A Cultural History of the Athlete from Achilles to Lebron.</i> A cogent, well-written argument that seeks to explain the prominence of the athlete in our collective imaginations, this book will change the way you look at athletes. Very readable and very entertaining. One of the best nonfiction books I've read this year.
Jared Diamond	<i>Guns, Germs and Steel.</i> This book chronicles the way that the modern world came to be and stunningly dismantles racially based theories of human history. In it, the author convincingly argues that geographical and environmental factors shaped the modern world.
David Gesner	<i>My Green Manifesto: Down the Charles River in Search of a New Environmentalism.</i> This book weaves an impassioned argument for a new kind of environmental movement that focuses on local, passionate involvement with a very well-written personal narrative about the author's trip down the Charles River. A perfect example of using personal experience to bolster an argument, this book will help you understand the use of this mode of exposition in your own writing -- a vital skill for the AP and for all good writing.
Malcolm Gladwell	<i>The Tipping Point.</i> A book about change that presents a new way of understanding why change so often happens as quickly and unexpectedly as it does.
Maxine Hong Kingston	<i>The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts.</i> A lyrical, experimental, moving, and thought-provoking memoir about Chinese-American woman and her identity, personal history, and views of America and her ancestry. A challenging and rewarding read. Very, very well-written.
Jonathan Kozol	<i>Savage Inequalities.</i> This book is a searing exposé of the extremes of wealth and poverty in America's public school system and the blighting effect the system has on poor children.

John McPhee	<i>The Control of Nature.</i> This is a bestselling account of places in the world where people have been engaged in all-out battles with nature, such as in Louisiana against the Mississippi River and in Iceland against a lava flow.
Richard Rodriguez	<i>Brown: The Last Discovery of America.</i> Using the color brown as a metaphor throughout, Rodriguez's book seeks to deconstruct, re-arrange, and reconsider our notions about "race" and "identity" in America. A classic of cultural criticism.
Rebecca Skloot	<i>The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks.</i> This imaginative and informative work traces the history and development of HeLa cells -- human cells that can survive in a laboratory. A lively mix of medical history, family history, and investigative journalism.

## FICTION.

Author	Title
Don DeLillo	<i>White Noise.</i> Biting satire about our postmodern condition (obsession with copies, irony, and the disintegration of the family) delivered by a narrator who is a professor of Hitler studies makes this a darkly comic novel. DeLillo is one of America's preeminent prose stylists, and this is one the of best books I've ever read.
Dave Eggers	<i>A Hologram for the King.</i> A modern day parable written in at once beautiful yet spare style that evokes Hemingway and lyrical minimalism, this novel traces the trials and tribulations of an American businessman (who is very much mired in a mid-life crisis) who has traveled to Saudi Arabia to meet with the king about a new business venture. This book manages to be philosophically rich and profound without being dense. A vital book that examines the question of America's (and American's) place in the world. Easily one of the best novels I read this year. I highly, highly recommend it.
Ernest Hemingway	<i>In Our Time.</i> Hemingway's first commercially published book, this features short stories along with interspersed prose-poem chapters. Many of the stories are set during or after World War I. A quick, entertaining read that is a good introduction to the "Hemingway style."
Ken Kesey	<i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.</i> One of the most significant counter-culture novels of the 1960s, this book tells a classic -- yet hilarious -- story of rebellion at a psych ward. Some truly unforgettable characters, particularly the tyrannical Nurse Ratched. Funny and thoughtful.
Ben Lerner	<i>Leaving the Atocha Station.</i> A poet traveling on a scholarship spends time down and out in Madrid. A very lyrical meditation on art, truth, violence, love, and poetry, this is a short novel that asks some very big questions. One of the deepest books I've read in recent memory. It will stick with you.
Herman Melville	<i>Billy Budd or Benito Cereno.</i> Two of Melville's classic sea stories. <i>Billy Budd</i> tells the moving (and long-lasting) tale of a young man's mutiny and the legend it inspires. <i>Benito Cereno</i> focuses on a mysterious marooned slave ship. Both are well-wrought stories, rich in symbolism and allegory.
Gloria Naylor	<i>Mama Day.</i> This novel explores the intricacies of an isolated yet modern African-American family on the fictional Willow Island off the coast of Georgia and South Carolina. Multiple perspectives and a plain prose style have helped make this a classic. Gullah culture, voodoo, the oral tradition, and well-drawn characters. Deceptively simple.
Sylvia Plath	<i>The Bell Jar.</i> An autobiographical novel chronicling a young woman's descent into mental illness. Deeply sad, but beautiful, too.

Philip Roth *Goodbye, Columbus.* This collection of short stories by one of America's most respected authors chronicles the Jewish experience in 1950s America. The title novella, in particular, has a memorable main character suffering from post-college ennui. Funny and entertaining reading.

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Colson Whitehead *John Henry Days.* A perfect example of a postmodern novel, this work uses multiple documents, songs, storylines, and an interrogation of the mythic folk hero John Henry to tell the story of one unforgettable West Virginia festival. Race, technology, and obsession, all in well-styled, virtuosic prose.

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## ESSAYS

Author	Title
James Baldwin	<i>Notes of a Native Son.</i> These ten essays were originally published during the 1940s and 1950s, but they remain relevant today. Baldwin was one of America's best writers, and here he focuses on the American and African-American experience.
Joan Didion	<i>Slouching Towards Bethlehem: Essays.</i> A work that gives profound insight into California in the 1960s, Didion's personal experiences, and the many places she has traveled. This collection often unmask the bright, guilty places of California (and its sunshine myths) and reveals its noir underbelly.
Joan Didion	<i>The White Album.</i> Named after the landmark album by the Beatles, this collection also focuses 1960s. An excellent portrait of this tumultuous decade and its aftermath, these essays also explore the emergence of American popular culture. Just take a look at the cover. One of the coolest books you'll ever read.
Ander Monson	<i>Vanishing Point: Not a Memoir.</i> A very contemporary collection of clever essays. Most focus on our collective obsession with "I." Monson's book is also linked to a very cool website that allows the reader to view pictures, films, and text that further illuminate the essays. One of the best books I've read in the past year. I strongly recommend this title.
David Sedaris	<i>Me Talk Pretty One Day.</i> Hilarious essays on a wide range of topics: family, art, the American South, and language, to name a few. Easy to read, but interesting and side-splittingly funny.
David Foster Wallace	<i>Consider the Lobster and Other Essays.</i> David Foster Wallace ranks as one of the best writers of his generation (and, arguably, of the entire American canon). This collection has some tremendous essays on a wide range of topics: a lobster festival in Maine, the English language, the aftermath of 9/11, political campaigns, and just about everything in between. Very, very funny and brilliant. Highly recommended.
E.B. White	<i>Essays of E.B. White.</i> Virtually perfectly crafted prose by one of the all time champions of the form. Required reading for any thoughtful student of the art of the essay.